

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF FUKUYAMA'S THESIS "THE END OF HISTORY?"

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ÖZET

Makalede Francis Fukuyama kısaca tanıtıldıktan sonra, 1989'da yazdığı "Tarihin Sonu" makalesi, makalede temel vurgulanan konular ve çelişkili yanıtları tartışılıyor. Ardından makalenin tartışmalara yol açması üzerine 1992'de yazdığı "Tarihin Sonu ve Son İnsan" kitabında savunduğu temel noktalar belirtilerek, makaleyle karşılaştırmalar yapılıyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tarihin sonu, ilk insan, son insan, Batı liberal demokrasisi.

ABSTRACT

Brief look at the profile of Francis Fukuyama. Discusses Fukuyama's article "The End Of History?" which was written in 1989, at the end of Cold War in an optimistic atmosphere. The main contradictions, shortcomings, early and generalized conclusions of this article, in explaining the post Cold War world are discussed. This article is compared with the book "The End of History And The Last Man", which was also written by Fukuyama. Main arguments that were stated in this book are also discussed.

Key Words: the end of history, Western liberal democracy, first man, last man, thymos, struggle for recognition

A. INTRODUCTION

Francis Fukuyama, is a senior researcher at the Rand Corporation. He is also a fellow of the John Hopkins University, School for Advanced International

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Studies' Foreign Policy Institute. He is a political scientist who specializes in Middle- Eastern political-military affairs and the foreign policy of the former Soviet Union. He has held different positions over the last 15 years, with Rand and with the US Department of State. He has written widely on issues relating to Soviet foreign policy in the Third World and on questions of democratization and political economy.¹

He wrote his famous article 'The End of History?' in 1989 in an optimistic atmosphere, during the collapse of Socialist regimes which was symbolised by the pulling down of the Berlin Wall. He declared the ultimate victory of liberal democracy and argued that "it may constitute the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the final form of human government and as such constitute the end of history."² In his article, he celebrated the victory of liberalism over all other ideologies, stating that liberal states were more stable internally and more peaceful in international relations.

He wrote his book 'The End of History And The Last Man', in 1992, in order to respond to the critics of his article and to defend his main thesis. In his book, he explains why he wrote his article 'The End of History?'. Also he made a lot of references to historical processes, philosophers' ideas and what he means by the concept of 'history.'

In 1999, he wrote his article 'Second Thoughts', which was also published in 'National Interest' at the tenth anniversary of the publication of the article 'The End of History'. In this article, he accepted his failure about his reference to modern natural sciences, in his 1989 article.

B- "THE END OF HISTORY?"

This article was written in 1989, in a period of unpredictable changes in the history. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, socialism, which is the main threat and alternative to liberalism was defeated. In this newly occurring situation, he wrote his article, without examining this process in detail and with its multi-dimensional aspects.

At the beginning of this article, he briefly summarizes his main argument as follows; victory of economic and political liberalism occurred at the end of

¹ <http://www.edventure.com/pcforum/96pcf/speakers/fukuyama.html>

² Davutoğlu, Ahmet, "The Clash of Interests: An Explanation of the World (Dis)order", *Perceptions*, December 97-February 98, p.92

the 20th century. The victory of the West and Western idea is evident firstly with the collapse of systematic alternatives to Western liberalism. He states that, in the past decade, there have been important changes in the intellectual climate of the world's two largest communist countries (Russia, China) and reform movements have begun in both. Also it can be seen in the spread of consumerist Western culture. As a result of these indications, he reaches to his main idea: "What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War or the passing of a particular period of post-war history; that is the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government."³ But as we see from the beginning, he states his arguments without a strong basis and with a lack of evidence.

After expressing his main argument, he makes some references to Marx, Hegel and Kojève. He says that his main concept 'the end of history', is not an original concept. This concept was firstly used by Hegel. According to Hegel, history is a dialectical process, with a beginning, a middle and an end. On the other hand, Marx, believes that, the direction of historical development was a purposeful one and would come to an end with the achievement of a communist utopia that would finally resolve all prior contradictions.⁴

He was affected especially by Hegel's historicism. According to this perspective, mankind has progressed through a series of primitive stages of consciousness, on his path to the present. Hegel believes that, at the end, rational form of society and state became victorious. According to Hegel, history came to an end in 1806 with Napoleon's defeat of the Prussian monarchy at the Battle of Jena which symbolised the victory of the ideals of the French Revolution. At that point, the vanguard of humanity actualized the principles of the French Revolution. But particular regimes in the real world might not implement these ideas fully. After stating these references, Fukuyama explains his own opinions. According to him, the state that emerges at the end of history is liberal, democratic, recognizes and protects man's universal right to freedom through a system of law. Fukuyama, also makes references to Kojève, who is a modern French interpreter of Hegel. For Kojève, this so-called 'universal homogenous state' is realized in the countries of post-war Western Europe.⁵

³ Fukuyama, Francis, "The End of History?", *The National Interest*, Summer 89

⁴ Fukuyama, Francis, "The End of History?"

⁵ *Ibid.*

Fukuyama explains the evolution process of human history as follows; human history was based on the existence of contradictions; as it can be seen in the primitive man's search for mutual recognition, contradiction between master and slave. But in the universal homogeneous state, all prior contradictions are resolved and all human needs are satisfied. There is no conflict over large issues and no need for generals or statesmen, what remains is primarily economic activity. So he states that, main contradictions of human history will come to end with the end of history. Fukuyama, also tries to improve the inefficiency of materialist theories and support Hegel's idealist perspective. He gives examples about Far Eastern societies; he emphasizes their cultural heritage, the ethic of work, family and other moral qualities which are important in explaining their economic performance. He also makes a reference to Kojève at that point; understanding the underlying processes of history, requires understanding developments in the realm of consciousness or ideas. So if ideological development has ended, the homogenous state would eventually become victorious throughout the material world. According to Fukuyama, state of consciousness, permits the growth of liberalism. In the past century, there have been two major challenges to liberalism; fascism and communism. Fascism was destroyed by World War II but the ideological challenge by communism was much more serious. Marx states that, fundamental contradiction of liberal society is between capital and labor, that can not be resolved within its context. But Fukuyama thinks that, class issue has been resolved in the West. With a reference to Kojève, US represents the achievement of the classless society.⁶ But this argument is also questionable when we think of black-white contradictions, which can be seen in the US until today.

For indicating the victory of liberalism, he gives examples of Japan and China which have been affected by liberalism. Also he examines Gorbachev period of transformation in Soviet Union. He states that, these countries are not really liberal but at the end of history it is not necessary that all societies become successful liberal societies.⁷ So with this statement he accepts that, all the countries throughout the world can not become liberal, at the same level.

After the collapse of two major challenges, there are two possibilities -religion and nationalism- that may cause new challenges. Modern liberalism, was a consequence of the weakness of religiously based societies. In the contemporary world, only Islam has offered a theocratic state as an alternative to libera-

⁶ Fukuyama, Francis, "The End of History?"

⁷ *Ibid.*

lism. But he thinks that, societies are satisfied in the sphere of personal life which is permitted in liberal societies. On the other hand, the vast majority of the world's nationalist movements do not have a political program, according to him.⁸ So these possibilities will not be real challenges to liberalism.

According to him, international life for the part of the world which has reached the end of history is more occupied with economics than with politics or strategy. Death of Marxism-Leninism, means the growing 'Common Marketization' of international relations. World at that point, would be divided between historical and post-historical parts. Conflict between these states, would still be possible. Also ethnic and nationalist violence, terrorism will continue.⁹ So at this point he again confirms that, the end of history can not be achieved throughout the world and also there will be still contradictions between different countries and new emerging challenges.

On the other hand, he states that, the end of history will be very sad. Because the struggle for recognition will be replaced with economic aims. There will be neither art, nor philosophy. As a result of these, most of the people that has reached the end of history feel nostalgia and this may cause competition even in the post-historical world.¹⁰ So here he again confirms that, there will not be a phase in the world history which is totally peaceful and without any contradictions and challenges.

If we look at some of the criticisms about this article; Allan Bloom, who is a Professor at the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago, criticizes Fukuyama at that point. For Kojève and Kojève's Hegel at the end of history, reason has won and the real has become rational but Fukuyama says that he'll rebel against it, in order to get history started all over again. Gertrude Himmelfarb, who is a Professor at the University of New York criticizes him that he comes lately to the possibility of religion, nationalism, race and ethnicity as ideological competitors to liberal democracy and dismiss them as not serious competitors because they have no universal significance.¹¹

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ "Responses to Fukuyama", *The National Interest*, Summer 89.

C-"THE END OF HISTORY AND THE LAST MAN"

After his famous article, Fukuyama wrote this book in 1992. In the introduction part of this book, he explains firstly why he wrote his article in 1989. He says that there was an invitation by the Professors of University of Chicago, to deliver a lecture on that title. This lecture became an article with the efforts of an editor of the National Interest. And encouragements by the people from Free Press, provided moving from article to the book.¹² These statements of Fukuyama show that, reemergence of the concept 'the end of history', was not firstly wanted to be expressed by him.

At an interview with Fukuyama, he states that the subject of his book is about the question of whether there exists such a thing called history or not. And also he adds; "the end of history, refers to what I think still remains, the question of whether that evolution finally culminates in a certain kind of civilization that will be the last civilization that mankind will achieve, because it's the right one, it's the one that fits the human nature in an appropriate way. And what I argue in the book is that, liberal democracy comes much closer to fitting human nature than any form of government or political organization...not every country is a liberal democracy, there are many dictatorships to the right and the left remaining but as a systematic idea liberal democracy is all there is now and we have seen that in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, communism was undermined by the fact that people did not believe that was a viable form of government, that it had no legitimacy and in fact democratic ideas were the primary ones that people found exciting and just."¹³ We can see that Fukuyama, three years after writing his article, still tries to defend his main argument, this time with more details and with more references to historical developments and arguments of the philosophers. But at the same time, he falsifies some of his own main arguments, in his book.

In this book he again makes a lot of references to Hegel and Marx. He states that, Hegel and Marx believe that the evolution of human societies would end when mankind had achieved a form of society that satisfied their fundamental aims. For Hegel this was the liberal state while for Marx it was a communist so-

¹² Fukuyama, Francis, The End of History And The Last Man, The Free Press, New York, 1992, ix (Introduction)

¹³ "Booknotes Transcript- Francis Fukuyama, The End of History and The Last Man" Retrieved January 12, 2000 on the World Wide Web: <http://www.booknotes.org/transcripts/50062.htm>

ciety. It means that, there would be no further progress, in the development of underlying principles and institutions, because all of the really big questions would have been settled. He explains the directional history of mankind that will eventually lead the greater part of humanity to liberal democracy by two reasons: economy and the struggle for recognition. Societies have become increasingly linked with each other through global markets and spread of a universal consumer culture. On the other hand, modern natural science has a common and directional effect on historical change; it causes uniform social changes across different nations. On the other hand, 'struggle for recognition' was emphasized a lot in his book. It was a concept of Hegel. This concept differs human beings fundamentally from the animals, because in addition to natural needs like food, water and shelter, human beings also want to be recognized as a human being. And this concept, was seen by him as the motor of history. And at the liberal state, universal recognition will occur. So there will not be any struggle for recognition. Because liberal democracy replaces the irrational desire to be recognized as greater than others, with a rational desire to be recognized as equal. Fukuyama also makes a reference to Nietzsche, about his concept of 'last man'. According to him, last man is a typical citizen of a liberal democracy.¹⁴

He gives a lot of examples about historical processes: weakness of the Soviet system, democratic transitions in Latin America and Southern Europe and also East Asia's adaptation process to liberalism. He also makes a reference to Hegel's dialectic perspective.¹⁵ According to Hegel, the universal history of mankind was man's progressive rise to full rationality, which reflects itself in liberal self-government. The other reference is Kant, for whom, the end point is the realization of human freedom.¹⁶ He again makes a reference to Kojève, who states that 'European Community' is an appropriate institutional embodiment of the end of history.¹⁷ This shows the ethnocentric view of both Kojève and Fukuyama.

According to him, industrialization should produce liberal democracy. Because democracy is the suitable platform to reconcile conflicting interests which are created by a modern economy. Also science may proceed only in an atmosphere of freedom.¹⁸

¹⁴ Fukuyama, F., *The End of History And The Last Man*, Introduction

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.28-30

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.58-60

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.67

¹⁸ Fukuyama, F., *The End of History And The Last Man*, pp.109-117

In order to come to the concept of 'last man', he makes references to Locke's and Hobbes' 'first man' who are in the state of nature. The main aim of the 'first man' is self-preservation. Also Hegel uses the term 'first man'. According to Hegel, 'first man' also struggles for recognition, in addition to self-preservation.¹⁹

Fukuyama also uses the concept 'thymos', with a reference to Plato. For Plato, 'thymos' is necessary for survival of any political community. Because it is the basis that man is drawn out from the selfish life of desire and look toward the common good.²⁰ Also Nietzsche emphasizes 'thymos' against desire and reason. According to Fukuyama, the struggle for recognition, comes from the thymotic part of the soul and both the desiring and thymotic parts of our souls find satisfaction in the liberal democratic state. Fukuyama, also emphasizes the relationship between Christian doctrine and emergence of liberal democratic societies in Western Europe with a reference to Hegel, who talks about Christianity as the absolute religion. Because this religion establishes the universal equality of men in the sight of God.²¹

Fukuyama also talks about Asian countries' success. He also emphasizes their cultures' effect on their economic success (e.g. their strong work ethic). In his book, the most important challenge to liberalism is stated as this structure, which combine liberal economies with cultural values instead of communism. He criticizes realism in his book. He states that, according to realism, insecurity, aggression and war are permanent possibilities in the international system. This condition can not be changed by the appearance of specific forms of societies, because it is rooted in unchanging human nature.²² Moreover he thinks that, realism does not take account of history.²³

He claims that liberal societies have peaceful relations with each other. They have no grounds on which to contest each other's legitimacy because they share principles of universal equality and rights. They fight with states which are not liberal; for example, United States fought in two world wars, also in Korea, Vietnam and Persian Gulf. On the other hand, he claims that the peaceful influence of liberal ideas on foreign policy, can be seen in the changes that have oc-

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.158-159

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.183

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.196

²² *Ibid.*, p.254

²³ *Ibid.*, p.258

curred in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe since the mid-1980's.²⁴ But in 1990's, especially in Eastern Europe in cases of Bosnia and Kosovo, we saw absolutely different developments which falsify his argument about this issue.

He talks about historical and post-historical worlds. For the foreseeable future, the world will be divided between these parts according to him. In the post-historical world, the main interaction between states would be economic and power politics would decrease. There would be considerable economic but little military competition. The post-historical world would still be divided into nation-states but nationalisms would have made peace with liberalism. Economic rationality will abolish traditional forms of nationalism. On the other hand, in the historical world, there would still be religious, national and ideological conflicts, depending on the stage of development of the country. Also in the historical world, old rules of power politics still exist and nation-states are still the main actors.²⁵ So, he accepts that there is a lot of difference at the development levels of the states. And to prove his thesis, he states that some parts of the world has come to the end of history.

He also accepts that major social inequalities will remain even in the most perfect liberal societies. There would still be tension between principles of liberty and equality. There is no point that liberty and equality come into balance.²⁶ As a result of imperfect reciprocity of recognition, there may be attempts in the future to find alternatives to liberal democracy and to capitalism from the Left.²⁷ So he believes that, there have not been still any alternatives to liberalism, but he accepts that there will be attempts to find one.

According to Hegel, at the beginning of history, slave risks his life in a bloody battle to struggle for recognition. For Fukuyama, at the end of history, nobody would no longer have to risk their lives in a battle, because they would satisfy all of their needs.²⁸

Fukuyama, also emphasizes Nietzsche's concept 'last man'. According to Nietzsche, human beings do not only struggle for recognition, which is based on 'thymos'. There is also a desire to be recognized as superior to others which is based on 'megalothymia'. This desire is the basis of conquest and imperialism, as well as for the creation of great symphonies, novels, paintings.²⁹ He thinks

²⁴ Fukuyama, F., *The End of History And The Last Man*, p.263

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.276-277

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.292-293

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.299

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.311

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.304

that some degree of 'megalothymia' is a necessary precondition for life itself.³⁰ Fukuyama claims that, liberal democracy is successful at substituting 'megalothymia' with rational consumption, and we become last men. But human beings will rebel at the idea of being undifferentiated members of a universal and homogeneous state. They will find it boring. They will want to have ideals by which to live and die, they will want to risk their lives. This is the contradiction that, liberal democracy has not yet solved.³¹ Fukuyama, with accepting this contradiction of liberal democracy, disproves his own main argument. Because human beings can not still reach the satisfactory last era with the liberal democracy.

In addition to this, he states that, human beings can not imagine living in a world without struggle. If the greater part of the world is characterized by peaceful liberal democracy, then they will struggle against peace, prosperity and democracy.³² He again disproves his claim of totally peaceful era of the human history by this statement.

At the end of his book, he defends an absolutely different argument from his main thesis. He states that, no regime is able to satisfy all men in all places. This includes liberal democracy. Liberty and equality have not been extended to all people. So people, who remain dissatisfied, will always have the potential to restart history. At that point he made a reference to Aristo's cyclical history argument. He also accepts that, all regimes are imperfect in some way and those imperfections would lead people to change the regime.³³ So Fukuyama accepts at the end of his book again that liberal democracy can not satisfy all human needs so can not be regarded as the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and as the final form of human government. By this statement he falsifies his own arguments of he put in his article 'The End of History'.

D- CRITIQUES ABOUT FUKUYAMA'S THESIS

His understanding of history is unilinear historical progress which is the common element of Hegelian and Marxist philosophy. From this perspective,

³⁰ Fukuyama, F., The End of History And The Last Man, p.315

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.314

³² *Ibid.*, p.330

³³ *Ibid.*, pp.334-335

Fukuyama's theory is reformulation of the basic postulates of the 19th century.³⁴

His understanding of coherent and directional history of mankind, presupposes the identification of mankind with western man and identification of history with the history of Western civilization. It does not only neglect the constructive contribution, made by other civilizations in the past, but also ignores the possibility of the formation of a theoretical and practical alternative by these civilizations in the future. In his analysis, non-Western societies only have the role of being dependent variables or subjects of the expansion of the Western values and institutions. As a result of his reductionism, the experiences of the western civilization are absolutely universalized.³⁵ So we can say that, his historicist approach is subjective and ethno-centric.

He claims that, western route toward modernism, is accepted universally so, non-western countries will also follow this route. Also he believes that, the aim of modernization and advancement oblige all societies to respect the values of West.³⁶ So we can say that his theory is mostly shaped by a modernist approach. His theory supplies a defensive position to the modernist version of western civilization against the challenges of the civilizational crisis. It is a pragmatist perspective, because instead of considering the several aspects of the political and social environment, which are threatening the security and well-being of mankind, he chooses to emphasize that human beings are lucky to be present at the last stage of human history.³⁷

We can also say that, his theory can be identified with the modernist paradigm of homo occidentalis. Because according to the modernist paradigm of homo occidentalis, all elements of the non-western periphery world should accept the supremacy of the West.³⁸

In general, theories of endism are a phenomena of the West.³⁹ They try to develop new definitions of religion, ideology or history, which are very much dependent on the Euro-Christian experience, which is set in a specific time-spa-

³⁴ Davutoğlu, Ahmet, Civilizational Transformation And The Muslim World, Mahir Pub., 1994, p.1

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.5

³⁶ Arıboğan, Ülke, "The Place of Idealism in The Discipline of International Relations", İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası, October 97, p.14

³⁷ Davutoğlu, A., Civilizational Transformation And The Muslim World, p.5

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.69

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.2

ce framework that shapes the status quo.⁴⁰ So these theories of endism try to develop ideological formulations of a status quo. Fukuyama's attempt can be defined as to formulate a theory of endism to prepare the theoretical basis of the status quo, which the USA wants to maintain in the post Cold War era.

Fukuyama's methodological approach reduces the essence of historical continuity to one predominant factor: 'the struggle for recognition'. This reduction creates a highly overgeneralized historical theory. This pragmatic approach may lead to a huge deterministic theory of history, also a very categoric interpretation of the historical past. In addition to these, it produces independent spontaneous pictures of the external features of the social structures, which creates an image of discontinuity. He also goes beyond Hegel's methodological principles, because Hegel insists that philosophy should deal with, what has really objectified itself in the actual world, rather than with prediction to the future of the history, based on the potentialities, which always be the subject of subjectivity. So Fukuyama's methodological approach, can neither provide a consistent analysis of the existing actual phenomena, nor suggest a pragmatic problem-solving method and theory for the difficulties, which face the future of the mankind.⁴¹

His theoretical approach can be defined as neo-liberal. Idealist approaches reaccelerated in the second half of the 1980's, in the name of neo-idealism or neo-liberalism. This approach is different from Wilson's liberalism; because in Wilson's liberalism there is a demand and belief for the peaceful resolution of the conflicts and a peaceful world, but according to neo-liberalism there has not been any reason for conflicts till now; contradictions were solved, liberalism and democracy are the winners in the conflict that has occurred with totalitarian regimes, all through the history.⁴² In this context, Fukuyama believes that, there is not a reason of war between democratic and liberal states. His thesis is the version of idealism that is identical with ideological victory.

E-CONCLUSION

Fukuyama's, "the end of history" thesis fully fits to the Gulf War conditions. Because, after Iraq's attack to Kuwait, all democratic countries from all over the world came together to end this condition which did not suit the world's

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.4

⁴¹ Davutoğlu, A., *Civilizational Transformation And The Muslim World*, pp.6-7

⁴² Arıboğan, Ü., "The Place of Idealism in The Discipline of International Relations", p.14

last stage of ideological evolution. However, his thesis was completely falsified firstly with Bosnia. Ethnic cleansing in Bosnia marked the end of the optimistic dreams of Fukuyama's endism.⁴³ Because none of liberal democratic countries, try to end this unhumanitarian event. The states that finished their evolution did not act as they had to do. Moreover the cases of Kosovo and especially the events on 11 September 2001 in the USA show that, nothing has come to an end, instead of this, the world history will probably face with important transformation processes in the future.

He tried to make a long-term civilizational analysis, but with only analysing short-term indicators. So he may use the term 'civilizational transformation', instead of 'end of history'. The era which was tried to be analyzed and defined by Fukuyama was only one of the turning points in the world history. As we can see, the history is within an ongoing transformation process which needs further analysis.

Consequently we can say that, Fukuyama wanted to give a name to the situation after the collapse of communism. He gave the name 'the end of history', with one-dimensional, ethno-centric perspective. He was too quick to claim such an assertive thesis. Probably he did this to legitimize and formulate the theoretical framework of the New World Order. Because to create a new world order, the old one must have an end. To legitimize US's leader role, he uses Hegel. Because he also ends history with the victory of one state. To show US's ever lasting victory, he had to create a very optimistic perspective. His main contribution is, after his article's publishment there has been an acceleration in critiques about the post cold war world. So people from all over the world think and talk about the post-cold war era and its consequences.

43 Davutoğlu, A., *Civilizational Transformation And The Muslim World*, p.53

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